

Return TO Auschwitz

A SURVIVOR'S STORY



abc 7



Fritzie Fritzshall

HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR



A medium shot of Cardinal Blase Cupich, an elderly man with grey hair, wearing a dark clerical collar. He is looking slightly to his right with a serious expression. In the background, there is a wooden building with a porch and steps, and some greenery. The lighting suggests it's daytime.

Cardinal Blase Cupich

ARCHBISHOP OF CHICAGO





“It’s hard to do this
without getting emotional.”





ABC 7 Chicago

1 hr •

Fritzie Fritzshall, the president of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center in Skokie, survived years of hardship and escaped near-certain death in Auschwitz, the Nazi concentration camp in what was then German-occupied Poland. Her story takes on new urgency amidst an uptick in anti-Semitic hate crimes.



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ABC7 Eyewitness News Presents Return to Auschwitz: A Survivor's Story

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Monday, July 22, 2019 12:04AM

Fritzie Fritzshall, the president of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center in Skokie, survived years of hardship and escaped near-certain death in Auschwitz, the Nazi concentration camp in what was then German-occupied Poland.

More than a million people died at Auschwitz, mostly Jews, including Fritzshall's mother and two young brothers. Her grandfather died on the way to the camp.

She's returned to see the camp before but now, more than seven decades after she was liberated on a death march from Auschwitz, Fritzshall returned for what may be the final time with Chicago's Roman Catholic Cardinal Blase Cupich.

At a time when the FBI data shows that hate crimes are up 17% year to year and anti-Semitic hate crimes are up 37% returning to the place of history's darkest crime carries new relevance today. The Anti-Defamation League also is tracking an uptick in anti-Semitic incidents in the Midwest and nationwide.

ABC7 Eyewitness News Exclusive



By [Alan Krashesky](#) and Ross Weidner

Monday, July 15, 2019 10:35PM

CHICAGO (WLS) -- A door of death opened the moment boxcars, crammed with Jews from across Europe, arrived at night on the long train tracks that cut through the center of the concentration camp. Fritzie Fritzshall was 13 years old the night she arrived there at the largest camp at Auschwitz, known as Auschwitz II or Auschwitz-Birkenau. At the chaotic end of a days-long journey, she said she heard an urgent warning from a prisoner already in the camp.

"He knew that the children under the age of 15 would go to the gas chambers," Fritzshall said. "He saw young children like myself and he whispered in Yiddish, in Jewish, all I kept hearing was, 'you're 15, remember you're 15.'"

Lying about her age, in that moment, made the difference between life and death.

"We lined up and our children, the young children, were pulled away. If the mother didn't want to give up the child she went with the child, but she didn't know where she was going," Fritzshall said.

She said one group was spared for another day and another was sent directly to the gas chamber. In that confusion, a crucial heartbreakingly mistake.

"Was this the last spot you saw your mother alive?" Alan Krashesky asked.

"This was the last place I saw my mother," Fritzshall answered. "We were separated. This is where I told her she belonged in that line, not knowing that the line was going to take her right to the gas chambers. So yes, this is the last place I saw her."

On arrival, women were separated from men and families were torn apart.

Fritzshall was never reunited with her two younger brothers. She lived in a crowded barracks, packed in sleeping quarters.

"The worst of the worst of the worst was happening in this camp," said Fritzshall.

The camp attempted to strip any essence of human dignity from the prisoners who were here. Inside barracks on the site you can still see an example of the camp's bathroom or latrine, a huge open room with rows of holes that are in concrete on the floor.

"Several hundred women were coming in at the same time using the bathroom, so, can you imagine the dignity where you sit on one of those?" Fritzshall said.

And yet in this sordid place prisoners found a brief respite, where meetings took place and where prayers were said.

"The latrine to us was very important," said Fritzshall. "The latrine is the only place that the Germans wouldn't come into."

Her life was saved more than once, but in particular, Fritzshall said, by 599 women who lived and worked with her in forced labor and near starvation. They gave Fritzie, the youngest, their ration of crumbs.

"It's astonishing that people could find deep within them a sense of love and generosity to help someone even though they were suffering so much," said Cardinal Cupich.

"I never forget those 599 women or I wouldn't be here today," Fritzshall said. "I see them in their rags. I see them lining up to give me a crumb when they're hungry. I'm not sure I've fulfilled my promise but I certainly have tried."

Her promise is to tell this story. At the end of this return visit to Auschwitz, the nearly 90-year-old survivor lit a candle at the ruins of the gas chamber for her mother, her two brothers, for the more than 1 million people who died there and the 6 million Jews and others who perished in the Holocaust.

Then the group said the Mourner's Kaddish, its words sailing over Auschwitz, the memorials and the train tracks that brought them here, not to be forgotten.

An ABC7 Eyewitness News Exclusive



By Alan Krashesky and Ross Weidner

Tuesday, July 16, 2019 6:40PM

There are many women who Fritzie Fritzshall credits with helping her survive the Auschwitz concentration camp during the Holocaust but it was her Aunt Bella who saved her from the gas chamber.

Fritzshall, who is approaching her 90th birthday, traveled back to Auschwitz for what is likely her last visit to the camp where she was kept prisoner. She was joined by her friend Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich and ABC7's Alan Krashesky.

Returning to the camp is a journey of will for Fritzshall, who is Jewish. She didn't want to come back to this place of death and despair where Nazis sent her at age 13, but she returned for a greater purpose.

"It's a story that we must remember," she said. "I'm doing this for my family, for my brothers, for my mother and for the 6 million others."

And on that day she was thinking of one relative she found among the prisoners some 75 years ago: her Aunt Bella, the woman who saved her life.

"She was the one that sold her daily rations to be able to get me onto one of these bunk beds that she slept in," Fritzshall recalled. "She's the one that said 'We just need to live through the night.' I can hear her whispering 'Tomorrow will be better, you'll see.' It was her courage that helped me live. She did not survive, but she gave me courage and hope to survive."

But she did more than that; she created a commotion as Fritzshall was led to the gas chamber, truly saving her life.

"I was in the gas chambers, literally walking to the gas chambers, when I was pulled out," she said. "I was at the end of the line and six of us were pulled out and to slave labor factory - but it was because of her that I was at the end of the line."

"Evil may have seemed to triumph a great deal here, but there were also wonderful acts of love and kindness and goodness that saved people like Fritzie and so many others," Cardinal Cupich said.

Fritzshall returned to Auschwitz to keep her promise to tell the story of voices that were silenced.

"This is a story, it's a human story, this isn't a story that I've made up, this is my life story and this is the life of the millions and millions that lived at this camp," she said.

Fritzshall is currently the president of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie.





HALT!

STOJ!





The ABC 7 logo, featuring the letters "abc" in a lowercase, italicized font inside a white circle, with the number "7" positioned to the right of the circle.

The ABC 7 logo, featuring the letters "abc" in a lowercase, italicized font inside a white circle, with the number "7" positioned to the right of the circle.

The ABC 7 logo, featuring the letters "abc" in a lowercase, italicized font inside a white circle, followed by a large, stylized number "7" with a circular arrow around it.

The ABC 7 logo, featuring the letters "abc" in a lowercase, italicized font inside a white circle, with the number "7" to its right.



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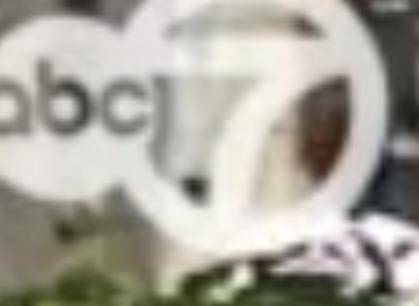


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The ABC Family television network logo, featuring the letters "abc" in a lowercase, white, sans-serif font inside a white, stylized cloud-like shape.











The ABC 7 logo, featuring the letters "abc" in a lowercase, italicized font inside a white circle, followed by a stylized "7" with a horizontal line through it.









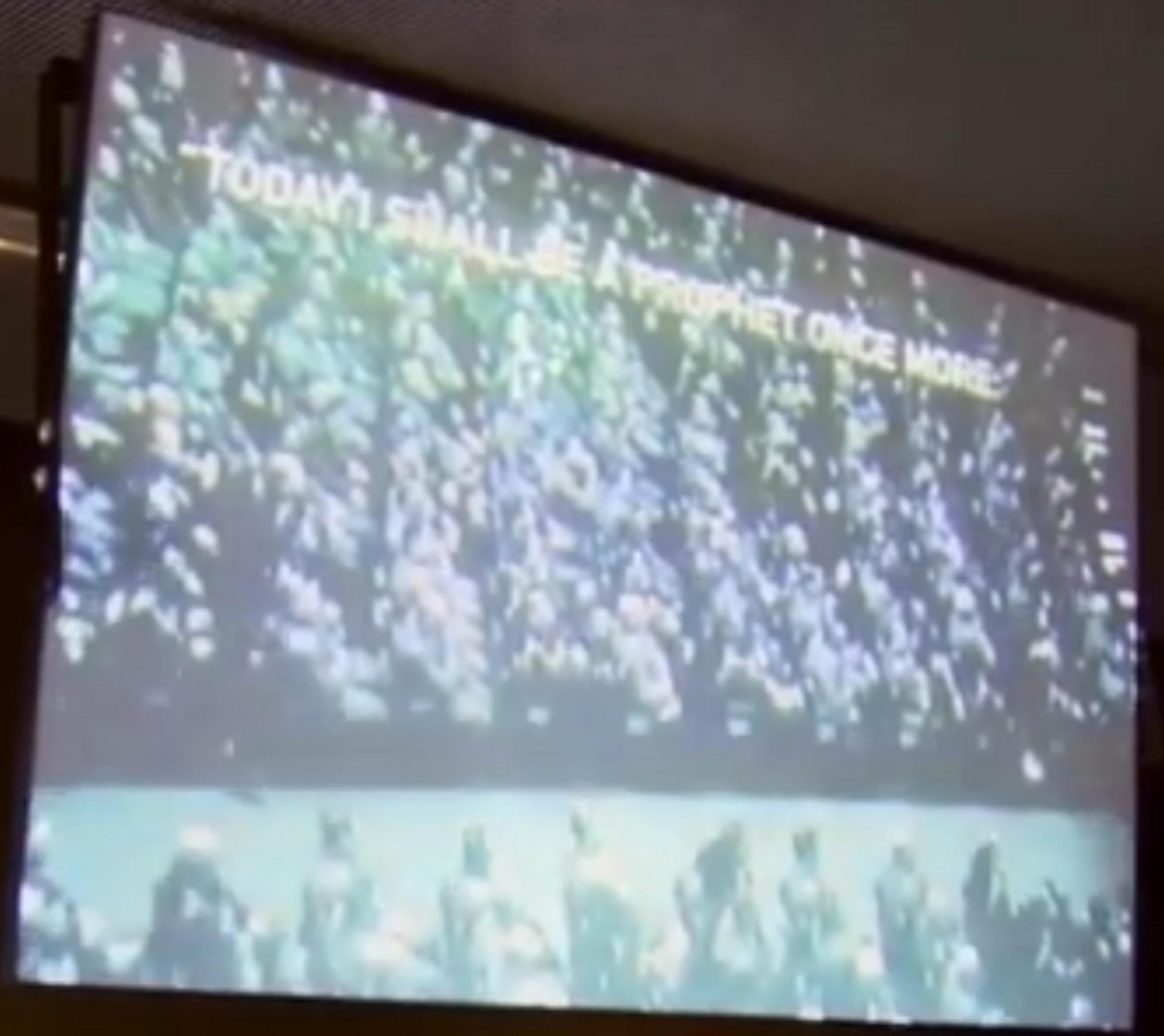
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EIN MÄCHTIGER FRIED





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The ABC 7 logo, featuring the letters "abc" in lowercase inside a white circle, with the number "7" in a larger white circle to its right.





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SCHWARZBAUM
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Metzner
14.1908
10.9.26

15.9.1902

KOHN FRA
15.9.1902

FANTL

GUSSEY
12.3.1902

WEISS M

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The ABC Family Channel logo, featuring the letters "abc" in a lowercase, italicized font inside a white circle.



The ABC 7 logo, featuring the letters "abc" in a lowercase, italicized font inside a white circle, with the number "7" positioned to the right of the circle.





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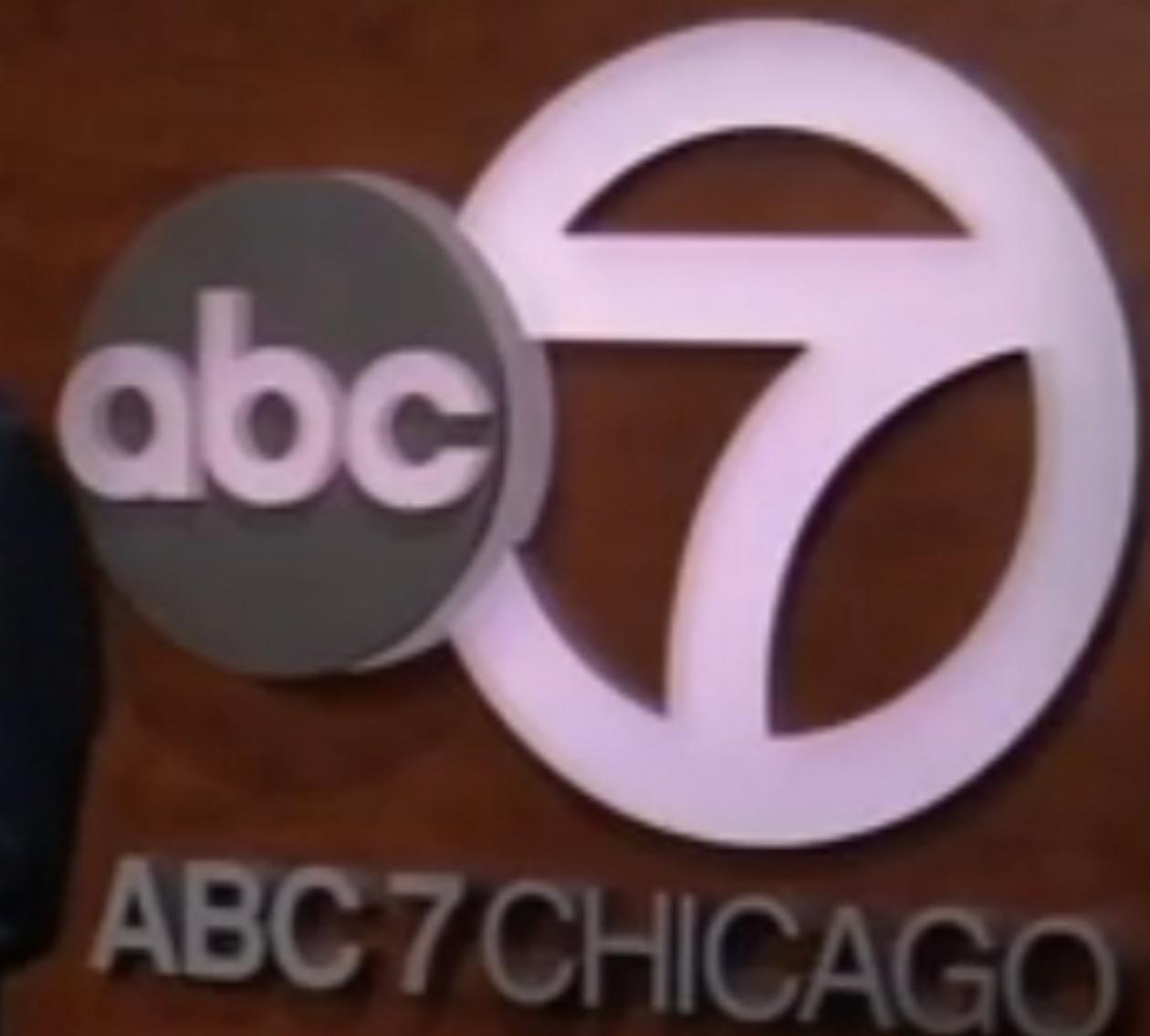
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ABC7 CHICAGO



1.1 Million Killed
at Auschwitz camps





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The ABC 7 logo, featuring the letters "abc" in a lowercase, italicized font inside a white circle, followed by the number "7" in a large, bold, black font.





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The ABC 7 logo, featuring the letters "abc" in a lowercase, italicized font inside a white circle, with the number "7" to its right.







The ABC 7 logo, featuring the letters "abc" in a lowercase, italicized font inside a white circle.







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Wessels, Place of death unknown | Wessels, Jacobus
Wessels, 8/9/1888, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Wessels, The Netherlands. Murdered in Treblinka
Wessels, Auschwitz, Poland | Wessels, Samuel, Jacob
Wessels, Antwerp, Belgium. Place of death unknown
Wessels, Samuel, abv. Rens, The Hague, 1913
Wessels, Poland | Wessels, Samuel, Jacob
Wessels, Auschwitz, Poland | Wessels, Samuel, Jacob
Wessels, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 1913
Murdered in Auschwitz, Poland | Wessels, Samuel, Jacob
Wessels, Treblinka, Poland | Wessels, Samuel, Jacob
Wessels, Auschwitz, Poland | Wessels, Samuel, Jacob

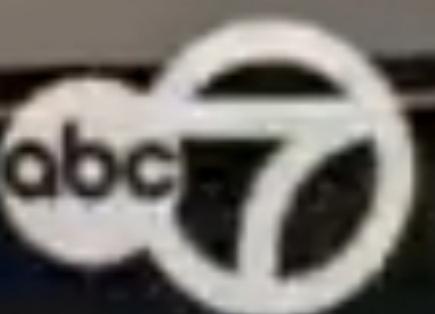




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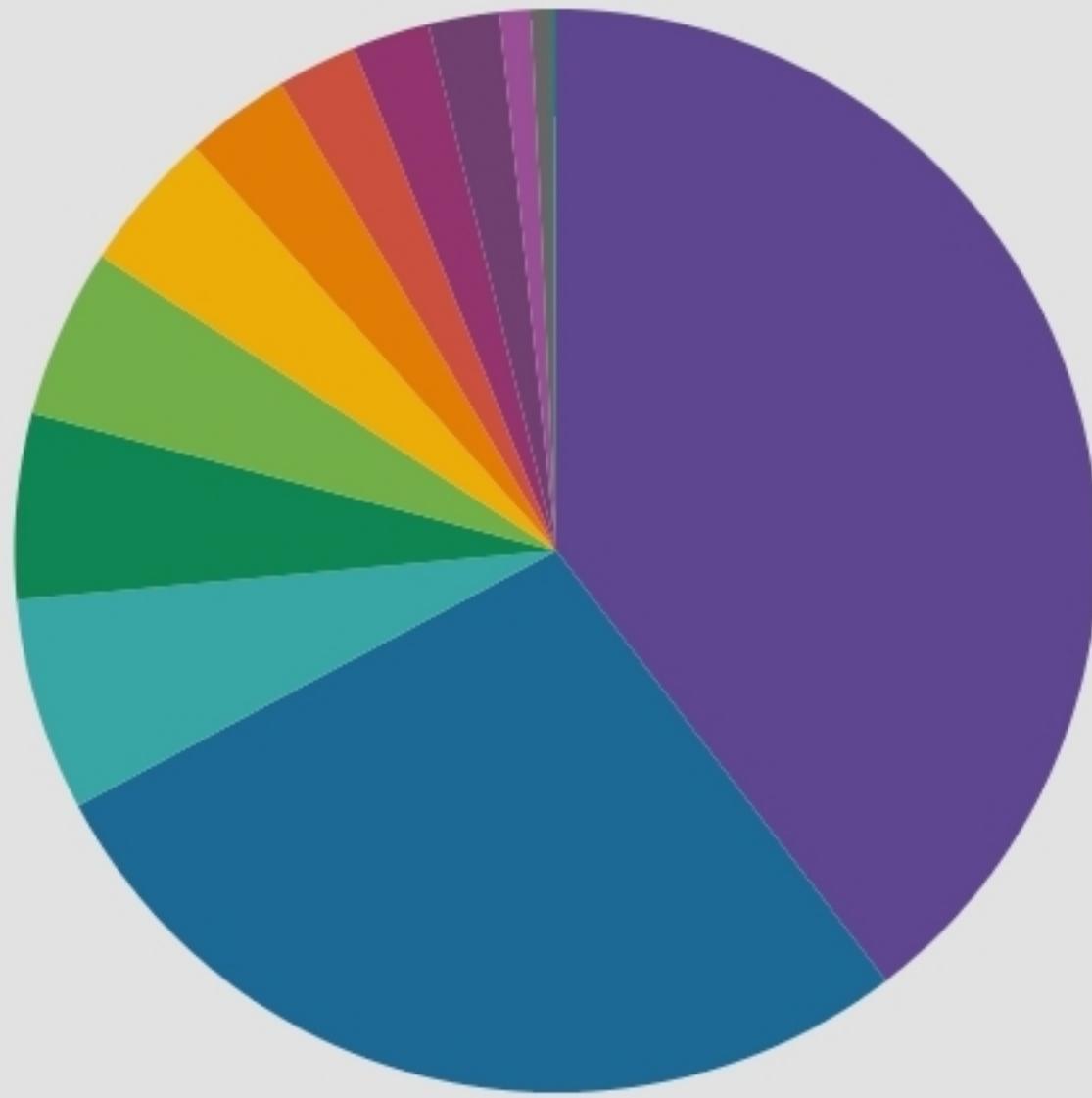
THIS IS A
SIGN FROM THE
AUSCHWITZ CONCENTRATION
CAMP.
IT WAS MADE BY
JEWISH PRISONERS
TO TELL OTHERS
WHICH GATE TO
ENTER.
IT READ:
MEN, WOMEN,
CHILDREN -
GO TO THE
RIGHT.
FREEDOM
IS ON THE
LEFT.

אושוויץ - קז'נְקָה
AUSCHWITZ - KZKA





Which countries did the Jews who were deported to Auschwitz come from?

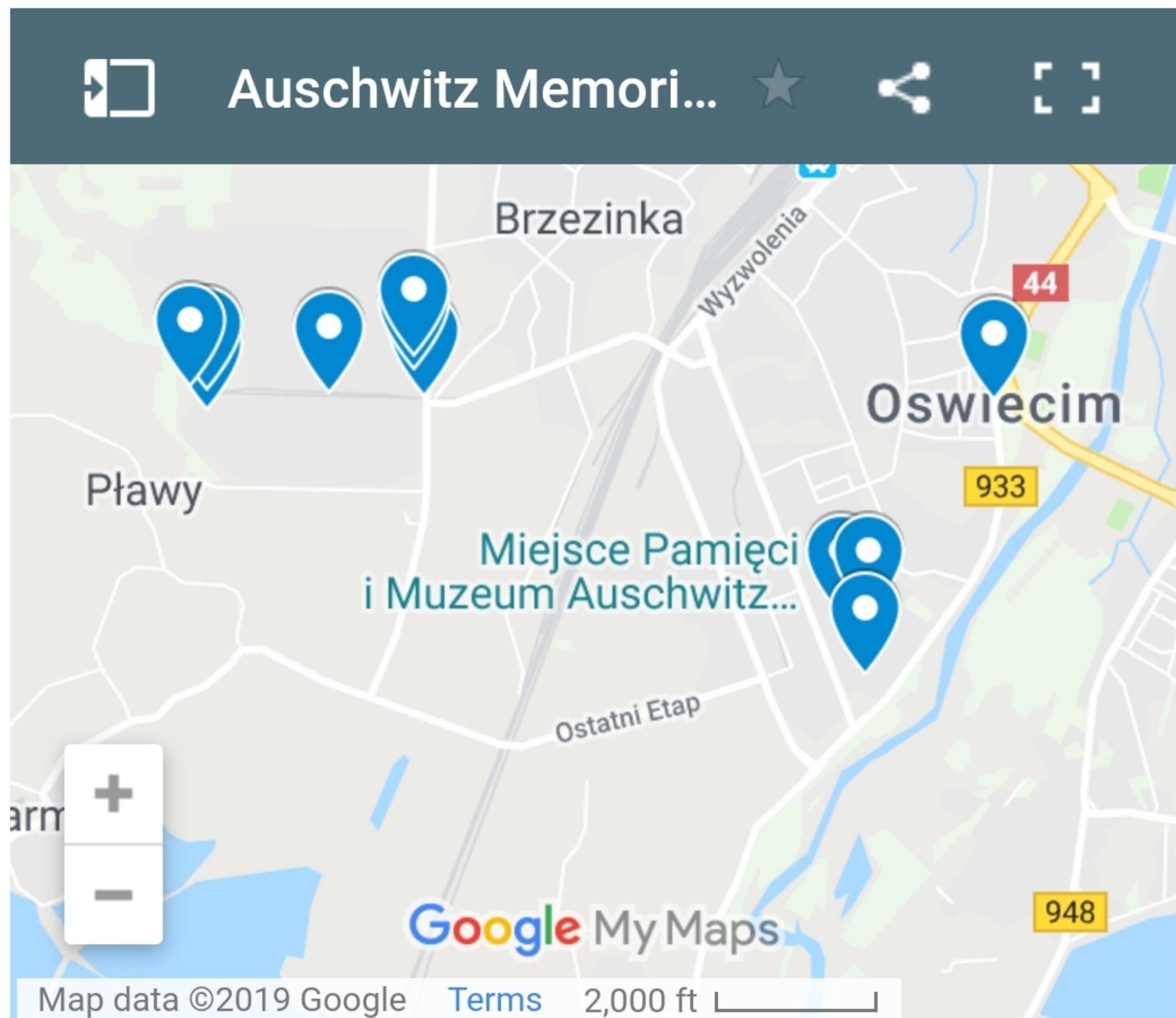


- Hungary (according to the borders during the war)
- Poland ■ France ■ The Netherlands ■ Greece
- The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (Theresienstadt)
- Concentration camps and other centers
- Slovakia (according to the borders during the war)
- Belgium ■ Germany and Austria ■ Yugoslavia
- Italy ■ Norway

Source: [Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum](#)

Locations highlighted in ABC 7

Eyewitness News Presents Return to Auschwitz: A Survivor's Story:





ezinka

arodów

Maksymiliana Kolbego

Wyzwolenia

Stanisławy Leszczyńskiej

Miejsce Pamięci
i Muzeum Auschwitz...

Ostatni Etap

Oświęcim

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44

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933

Gajowa

Ofiar Faszyzmu

Jakubows

Park w Birkenau

Birkenau Historyczna
Niemiecka Bram

z zagłady

